

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 12 July 2025
3.00pm

Bach and Raga

Amaan Ali Bangash sarod
Ayaan Ali Bangash sarod
Jennifer Pike violin
Anubrata Chatterjee tabla

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) Preludio from Partita No. 3 in E for solo violin BWV1006 (1720)

Sarabande from Partita No. 2 in D minor for solo violin
BWV1004 (1720)

Afternoon Raga

Amjad Ali Khan (b.1945) Romancing Earth (2019-20)



The artists are grateful for the support of hospitality partner Taj 51 Buckingham Gate Suites and Residences.



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Bach

For almost a century after his death, the music of **Bach** was treated with academic curiosity rather than love, in total contrast to the veneration he receives today as the apogee of Western music. The story of his Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin parallels that of his reputation, being little known until they were published in the early 19th Century. They are now a north star for violinists, a technical proving ground and a trusted barometer for the depths of artistic temperament.

The autograph manuscript, penned in Bach's flowing, curving musical handwriting, is dated 1720, towards the end of his time as Kapellmeister at the court of Leopold, Prince of the central-German principality of Anhalt-Köthen. Bach's Köthen days allowed him relative artistic latitude, and the Cello Suites and Brandenburg Concerti also date from the period. Where the Sonatas have a common four-movement structure and variation of key between their movements, the Partitas are suites of dances, all in a common key.

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Afternoon Raga

Amaan and Ayaan present the afternoon Raga Bhimpalasi. Raga Bhimpalasi (ascending) C-Eb-F-G-Bb-C (descending) C-Bb-A-G-F-Eb-D-C.

This Raga reminds us of a minor Pentatonic ascending and the Dorian scale descending. The compositions will be in 10 beats and 16 beats time cycles.

Romancing Earth (based on Raga Pilu)

Romancing Earth, composed by Amjad Ali Khan based in Raga Pilu, often described as a peaceful Raga, is associated with the second quarter of night. Amjad Ali Khan's melody is a profoundly vocal idiom that shares much with the North Indian classical music classics and latter day Bollywood. This performance is shaped as a binary structure with an extended introduction or Alaap. The Sarod opens the seven-part introduction with an ethereal descent of the notes of the Raga, as it emerges from the accompanying Shruti or drone. Already the main melody of the 2/3 piece is more than hinted at by the sarod. The sarod and violin exchange improvised embellishments of the raga as well as the melody. Close listening will reveal how the violin portamento at the critical cadential moments before passing the line back reveals its kinship to the *gamakas* (slides in Indian classical music). As the introduction ends, and the main body of the melody begins, the percussion enters. But it is the violin playing pizzicato (plucking the strings) who introduces the tabla onstage and together they become a unique rhythm section. The main tune now arrives in all its glory via the sarod, then is taken up in kind by the violin, her entrance here signaled by the tabla with the characteristic descending melodic flourish announcing key structural moments in this music. The two now join in a radiant declaration of the tune blossoming into a unique contrapuntal fantasy where sarod and violin alternate with virtuoso improvised arabesques on the tune, while the other intones the notes of the Raga below in the very same spirit as the *cantus firmus* styles of Medieval and Renaissance European musics. This is an important moment as it proposes, if not establishes, that counterpoint is not necessarily counter to the spirit of Hindustani music. Triumphant cascades in unison of Raga and melody bring this radiant romance to a glowing close.

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